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General Assembly
Fifty-fourth session

Official Records

88th plenary meeting
Thursday, 23 December 1999, 6 p.m.
New York

President: Gurirab ..... (Namibia)

The meeting was called to order at 8.50 p.m.

Agenda item 99

Sustainable development and international economic cooperation

(f) Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s

Report of the Second Committee (A/54/587/Add.6)

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/54/693)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Second Committee in paragraph 9 of its report (A/54/587/Add.6) and on the draft decision recommended by the Second Committee in paragraph 10 of the same report.

We turn first to the draft resolution, entitled "Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s".

The report of the Fifth Committee on the programme budget implications of the draft resolution is contained in document A/54/693.

The Second Committee adopted the draft resolution. May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 54/235).

The President: We shall now turn to the draft decision, entitled "Documents relating to the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s".

The Second Committee adopted the draft decision. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft decision was adopted.

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (f) of agenda item 99?

It was so decided.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded its consideration of all the reports of the Second Committee before it.

Reports of the Fifth Committee

The President: The General Assembly will now consider the reports of the Fifth Committee on agenda items 117, 120, 123, 125, 126, 142, 143, 150 and 172, 151, 163, 164, 166, 173, 12, 119, 124, 121 and 118.

I request the Rapporteur of the Fifth Committee, Mr. Jan Piotr Jaremczuk of Poland, to introduce the reports of the Fifth Committee in one intervention.

00-22263 (E)

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Mr. Jaremczuk (Poland), Rapporteur of the Fifth Committee: I have the great honour today to present to the General Assembly the reports of the Fifth Committee on the agenda items it considered during the main part of the fifty-fourth session of the Assembly. It should be noted that during the main part of the session the Fifth Committee dealt with 25 agenda items that were allocated to it.

Concerning agenda item 12 entitled, "Report of the Economic and Social Council", the report of the Fifth Committee is contained in document A/54/668. In paragraph 4 of that report, the Committee recommends to the General Assembly that it decide to take note of the relevant chapters of the report of the Economic and Social Council, namely chapters I, VII (sections B and C) and IX. That draft decision was adopted by the Committee without a vote.

With regard to agenda item 117, entitled "Financial reports and audited financial statements, and reports of the Board of Auditors", the report of the Fifth Committee is contained in document A/54/506/Add.1. In paragraph 7 of document A/54/506/Add.1, the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of a draft resolution, which was adopted by the Committee without a vote.

With regard to agenda item 118, entitled "Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations", the report of the Committee is contained in documents A/54/511 and A/54/511/Add.1. In paragraph 7 of document A/54/511/Add.1, the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of two draft decisions. Both draft decisions were adopted by the Committee without a vote.

Concerning agenda item 119, entitled "Programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999", the report of the Committee is contained in documents A/54/508 and A/54/508/Add.1, and in paragraph 6 of the latter document the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of a draft resolution which was adopted by the Committee without a vote.

Regarding agenda item 120, entitled "Programme planning", the report of the Committee is contained in document A/54/676. In paragraph 8 of that report, the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of a draft resolution which was adopted by the Committee without a vote.

With regard to agenda item 121, entitled "Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001", the report of the Fifth Committee is contained in document A/54/691. In paragraph 5 of that report, the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of five draft resolutions, all of which were adopted by the Committee without a vote.

With regard to agenda item 123, entitled "Joint Inspection Unit", the report of the Committee is contained in document A/54/507/Add.1. In paragraph 7 of that report, the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of a draft decision, which the Committee adopted without a vote.

Concerning agenda item 124, entitled "Pattern of conferences", the report of the Fifth Committee is contained in document A/54/690. In that report, the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of a draft resolution, which the Committee later adopted without a vote.

In connection with agenda item 125, entitled "Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations", the report of the Committee is contained in document A/54/685. In that report, the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of a draft resolution and of two draft decisions. The draft resolution and both draft decisions were adopted by the Committee without a vote.

Concerning agenda item 126, entitled "United Nations common system", the report of the Committee is contained in document A/54/677. In that report, the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of a draft resolution, which the Committee adopted without a vote.

Regarding agenda item 142, entitled "Financing of the International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991", the report of the Fifth Committee is contained in document A/54/678. In paragraph 6 of that report, the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of a draft resolution, which the Committee adopted without a vote.

With regard to agenda item 143, entitled "Financing of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Genocide and Other Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed

in the Territory of Rwanda and Rwandan Citizens Responsible for Genocide and Other Such Violations Committed in the Territory of Neighbouring States between 1 January and 31 December 1994", the report of the Committee is contained in document A/54/679. In that report, the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of a draft resolution, which the Committee adopted without a vote.

Concerning agenda item 150, entitled "Financing of the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone", and item 172, entitled "Financing of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone", the report of the Committee is contained in document A/54/686. In that report, the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of a draft resolution, which was adopted by the Committee without a vote.

In connection with agenda item 151, entitled "Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations", the report of the Fifth Committee is contained in document A/54/684. In that report, the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of two draft resolutions, three draft decisions and one oral draft decision on the question of death and disability benefits. The draft resolutions, the three draft decisions and the oral decision were adopted by the Committee without a vote.

With regard to agenda item 163, entitled "Review of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 48/218 B", the report of the Fifth Committee is contained in document A/54/673. In paragraph 6 of that report, the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of a draft resolution, which the Committee adopted without a vote.

Regarding agenda item 164, entitled "Human resources management", the report of the Committee is contained in document A/54/680. In paragraph 7 of that report, the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of a draft resolution, which the Committee adopted without a vote.

Concerning agenda item 166, entitled "Financing of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo", the report of the Fifth Committee is contained in document A/54/674. In paragraph 7 of that report, the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of a draft resolution, which the Committee adopted without a vote.

Finally, in connection with agenda item 173, entitled "Financing of the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor", the report of the Fifth Committee is contained in document A/54/687. In that report, the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of a draft resolution, which was adopted by the Committee without a vote.

The President: If there is no proposal under rule 66 of the rules of procedure, I shall take it that the General Assembly decides not to discuss the reports of the Fifth Committee that are before the Assembly today.

It was so decided.

The President: Statements will therefore be limited to explanations of vote or position.

The positions of delegations regarding the recommendations of the Fifth Committee have been made clear in the Committee and are reflected in the relevant official records.

May I remind members that under paragraph 7 of decision 34/401, the General Assembly agreed that

> "When the same draft resolution is considered in a Main Committee and in plenary meeting, a delegation should, as far as possible, explain its vote only once, i.e., either in the Committee or in plenary meeting unless that delegation's vote in plenary meeting is different from its vote in the Committee."

May I also remind delegations that, also in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes.

Before we begin to take action on the recommendations contained in the reports of the Fifth Committee, I should like to advise representatives that we are going to proceed to take decisions in the same manner as was done in the Fifth Committee, unless otherwise indicated.

Agenda item 117 (*continued*)

Financial reports and audited financial statements, and reports of the Board of Auditors

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/54/506/Add.1)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 7 of its report. The Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I consider that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 54/13 B).

The President: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 117.

Agenda item 120

Programme planning

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/54/676)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 8 of its report. The Fifth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 54/236).

The President: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 120.

Agenda item 123 (*continued*)

Joint Inspection Unit

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/54/507/Add.1)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft decision recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 7 of its report. The Committee adopted the draft decision without a vote. May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft decision was adopted.

The President: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 123.

Agenda item 125 (*continued*)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/54/685)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 9 of its report and the two draft decisions recommended in paragraph 10 of the same report.

We turn first to the draft resolution, entitled "Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations". The Fifth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 54/237 A to C).

The President: We will now turn to draft decision I, entitled "Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations". The Fifth Committee adopted draft decision I without a vote. May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to do likewise?

Draft decision I was adopted.

The President: We now turn to draft decision II, entitled "Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations". The Fifth Committee adopted draft decision II without a vote. May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to do the same?

Draft decision II was adopted.

The President: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 125.

Agenda item 126

United Nations common system

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/54/677)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 7 of its report. The

Committee adopted the draft resolution entitled "United Nations common system: report of the International Civil Service Commission" without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 54/238).

The President: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 126.

Agenda item 142

Financing of the International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/54/678)

The President: The Assembly will take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of its report. The Fifth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 54/239).

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 142.

Agenda item 143

Financing of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Genocide and Other Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of Rwanda and Rwandan Citizens Responsible for Genocide and Other Such Violations Committed in the Territory of Neighbouring States between 1 January and 31 December 1994

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/54/679)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended in paragraph 6 of its report. The Fifth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 54/240).

The President: I call on the representative of Finland, who wishes to speak in explanation of position on the resolution just adopted.

Mr. Kääriäinen (Finland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The European Union was pleased to join the consensus on the adoption of resolutions 54/239 and 54/240. The European Union has continuously supported the work of the International Criminal Tribunals. For that reason, we had hoped to have adequate time to address the issues related to the proposed budgets thoroughly. As we have said, it is fundamentally important for the Tribunals to be able to carry out their functions effectively and with an efficient use of resources. We have expressed our concern about the important issues relating to administrative functions that remain to be addressed. We are pleased that the resolutions just adopted will allow a thorough discussion of these issues while guaranteeing that the functioning of the Tribunals will not be hampered in any way.

The President: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 143.

Agenda items 150 and 172

Financing of the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone

Financing of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/54/686)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 7 of its report.

The Fifth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 54/241).

The President: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda items 150 and 172.

Agenda item 151 (*continued*)

Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/54/684)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the two draft resolutions recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 13 of its report and on the four draft decisions recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 14 of the same report.

The Assembly will first turn to draft resolution I, entitled "Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations".

The Fifth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

Draft resolution I was adopted (resolution 54/242).

The President: Draft resolution II is entitled "Support account for peacekeeping operations".

The Fifth Committee adopted draft resolution II without a vote. May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to do likewise?

Draft resolution II was adopted (resolution 54/243).

The President: The Assembly will now turn to draft decision I, entitled "Placement of the Republic of Kiribati for peacekeeping assessments".

The Fifth Committee adopted draft decision I without a vote. May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to do likewise?

Draft decision I was adopted.

The President: Draft decision II is entitled "Placement of the Republic of Nauru for peacekeeping assessments".

The Fifth Committee adopted draft decision II without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

Draft decision II was adopted.

The President: The Fifth Committee adopted draft decision III, entitled "Placement of Tonga for peacekeeping assessments", without a vote. May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to do the same?

Draft decision III was adopted.

The President: Draft decision IV is entitled "Death and disability benefits".

The Fifth Committee adopted draft decision IV without a vote. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to do likewise?

Draft decision IV was adopted.

The President: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 151.

Agenda item 163

Review of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 48/218 B

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/54/673)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of its report.

The Fifth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft resolution was adopted (54/244).

The President: We have concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 163.

Agenda item 164

Human resources management

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/54/680)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft decision recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 7 of its report.

The Fifth Committee adopted the draft decision without a vote. May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft decision was adopted.

The President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 164.

Agenda item 166

Financing of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/54/674)

The President: The Assembly will now proceed to take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 7 of its report.

The Fifth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I consider that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 54/245).

The President: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 166.

Agenda item 173

Financing of the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/54/687)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of its report (A/54/687).

The Fifth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 54/246).

The President: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 173.

Agenda item 12 (*continued*)

Report of the Economic and Social Council

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/54/668)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft decision recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 4 of its report (A/54/668).

May I take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt the draft decision?

The draft decision was adopted.

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of those chapters of the report of the Economic and Social Council which were allocated to the Fifth Committee?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 119

Programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/54/508/Add.1)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of its report (A/54/508/Add.1).

The Fifth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 54/247).

The President: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 119.

Agenda item 124

Pattern of conferences

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/54/690)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of its report (A/54/690).

The Fifth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolutions 54/248 A to E).

The President: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 124.

Agenda item 121

Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/54/691)

The President: I call on the representative of the United States of America for an explanation of vote before the voting.

Mr. Hays (United States of America): I wish to comment on agenda item 121, "Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001". This year's programme budget process was an exhausting one for all involved. Nonetheless, we believe that the outcome reflects in large measure the combined interests of many nations and regional groupings. Any process that involves 188 Member States and that aims for fairness and transparency will inevitably entail a rigorous debate that requires each nation to prioritize its goals. Creativity and flexibility are essential if consensus is to be achieved. That was certainly the case this year and we wish to express our gratitude to the many Member States that approached this process openly and were ready and willing to engage in substantive negotiations on the merits of the United Nations budget. That the product of this arduous shared effort is a budget premised on fiscal discipline is a tribute to the shared interest of Member States in a United Nations that is more streamlined, efficient and effective than ever before.

As we have indicated, the United States is unable to associate itself with the consensus on this budget because it is not in keeping with our national policy requiring strict budget discipline. It is our view, however, that this budget represents an important step in the direction of a revitalized United Nations that is stronger and more relevant than ever before. Setting this world body on a sound footing requires more than simply balancing the budget; it requires the active participation of the family of nations coming together around a common set of priorities and embracing sound management principles. We sense a growing awareness of this need within this body and an increased commitment to meeting it.

For our part, we believe that the United States has, as a priority, set a course that, once completed, will strengthen the underpinnings of this institution. Our Government is committed to working vigorously towards resolving the arrears issue with the active participation of the Member States over the course of the next year.

We feel that this budget is sound and structured to meet the Secretary-General's priorities, while adhering to the mandate given to this body to operate responsibly and within financial limits. For the future, the United States wishes to express its firm support for a budget process that is transparent and efficient and adheres to the policies endorsed by the General Assembly and the Secretariat regarding budget and personnel practices.

Overall, we are pleased to say that this process has brought us closer together in our common commitment to the United Nations global agenda.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the five draft resolutions recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 5 of its report (A/54/691).

We turn first to draft resolution I, entitled "Questions relating to the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001".

The Fifth Committee adopted draft resolution I without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

Draft resolution I was adopted (resolution 54/249).

The President: Draft resolution II, entitled "Programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001", was adopted by the Fifth Committee without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly too wishes to adopt the draft resolution?

Draft resolution II was adopted (resolution 54/250).

The President: Draft resolution III, entitled "Special subjects relating to the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001", was adopted by the Fifth Committee without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt the draft resolution?

Draft resolution III was adopted (resolution 54/251).

The President: The Fifth Committee adopted draft resolution IV, entitled "Unforeseen and extraordinary expenses for the biennium 2000-2001", without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

Draft resolution IV was adopted (resolution 54/252).

The President: Draft resolution V, entitled "Working capital fund for the biennium 2000-2001", was adopted by the Fifth Committee without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly likewise wishes to adopt the draft resolution?

Draft resolution V was adopted (resolution 54/253).

The President: I now call on those representatives wishing to explain their positions on the resolutions just adopted.

Mr. Kääriäinen (Finland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The European Union expresses its deep appreciation to the coordinator for agenda item 121, Mr. Nester Odaga-Jalomayo of Uganda, for a truly outstanding job. We want to express our gratitude and admiration also to the Controller, Mr. Jean-Pierre Halbwachs, to the Director of the Programme Planning and Budget Division, Mr. Warren Sach, and to their team. Over the past weeks, along with the Fifth Committee secretariat, and in particular Ms. Nora Benary, they have served the Committee in its informal consultations tirelessly and with grace in the context of the very difficult modus operandi of the Committee.

The European Union approached the negotiations on the proposed programme budget determined to review each and every section of the budget on its own merits. We wanted to see the United Nations perform effectively, with budgetary discipline, efficiency and an overall approach of getting value for money.

During the negotiations, the European Union was never guided by a need to reach a "benchmark" on the budget. Furthermore, we made an honest effort to meet the substantive concerns of other delegations, such as those belonging to the Group of 77. The result reflects the objectives of all delegations. We would, however, have preferred a more dynamic budget, more oriented towards the priorities of the Organization.

We are happy that the budget has been adopted without a vote. That reflects the spirit of resolution 41/213.

Mr. Barnwell (Guyana): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The adoption of the draft resolutions on which we have just taken action concludes protracted, arduous, intense and painful negotiations. During the entire negotiating process, the Group of 77 and China participated in a spirit of mutual understanding, cooperation and great flexibility. However, we regret to note that some of our negotiating partners took totally unrealistic positions, which made the process very complex and cumbersome.

The Group of 77 and China recognize the role of the Secretary-General as the chief administrative officer of the Organization under Article 97 of the Charter. It is his responsibility to submit to the General Assembly for its consideration and approval the proposed programme budget of the Organization under the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation. In accordance with the Regulations and Rules, the Secretary-General has to submit the proposed programme budget on the basis of the General Assembly's decisions on the budget outline.

The Group of 77 and China reaffirm that the level of resources for the programme budget should be adequate for full implementation of all mandated programmes and activities. There cannot be any arbitrary decision to lower the level of resources or to impose a ceiling which could have an adverse impact on effective programme delivery. The allocation of resources to the budget has to be justified on the basis of the requirements of output delivery and the priorities set in the Medium Term Plan, in accordance with the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation.

We recall that, at one stage during the negotiating process, efforts were made to take decisions outside the Fifth Committee. In this regard, the Group wishes to reaffirm the role of the Fifth Committee under rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, by which the Committee is entrusted with considering all administrative, financial and budgetary questions.

We would like to conclude by stating that the Group of 77 and China remain attached to the current budgetary process, which should be fully respected. In that connection, the Group stresses that any changes in that process must be subject for prior consideration and approval by the General Assembly. We would like to

underscore that it is the exclusive prerogative of the General Assembly to determine and decide on the budgetary process.

The Group of 77 and China regret that the negotiating process throughout the consultations on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 left room for improvement. The conditions under which the Fifth Committee was forced to work did not promote smooth and transparent negotiations. The extraordinary delay in the submission of a number of documents multiplied the difficulties faced by the Committee during the process. That caused extreme difficulties, particularly for small delegations. We emphasize that in the future the Secretariat should submit all documents in accordance with the six-week rule. And all draft resolutions with financial implications should be submitted in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 13 of General Assembly decision 34/401.

Finally, the Group would like to express its deep appreciation for the efforts made by the coordinator for this agenda item, Mr. Nester Odaga-Jalomayo of Uganda. His tireless efforts helped the Committee reach consensus on this important agenda item. We also appreciate the commendable efforts made by all the Secretariat staff and their invaluable assistance to the Fifth Committee in this prolonged negotiating process.

Mr. Duval (Canada): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the delegations of Australia, New Zealand and Canada in explanation of position following the adoption of the programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001.

We are pleased that, overall, fiscal discipline has been maintained. We are also pleased that considerable savings have been achieved to compensate for increased costs. The Fifth Committee agreed to some justifiable reductions in the new budget as well as to some additional proposals.

Such negotiations inevitably entail political compromises on the part of all delegations, but the fact remains that the Secretary-General, in his role as chief administrative officer of the Organization, had not requested most of these additional proposals. Nor were the proposals reviewed and scrutinized by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions or by the Committee on Programme and Coordination.

In our view, significant departures from the Secretary-General's proposals and from the advice of the expert bodies mandated to review the budget undermine the established budgetary and programme procedures of the United Nations.

In his statement on the proposed programme budget, Ambassador Fowler, speaking on behalf of Australia, New Zealand and Canada, stated our desire to see a more concise budget resolution that focused on governance issues and not on administrative minutiae. Unfortunately, that was not the case. We will continue to advocate a more strategic approach.

We regret that one Member State was unable to join the consensus, but we take note of the explanation given. Nonetheless, we are pleased with the outcome and join in the consensus.

Negotiations have been lengthy, difficult and delicate. We would, of course, have preferred an outcome in which no additions were made to the original proposals of the Secretary-General. However, we recognize that compromises were necessary in order to achieve the desired result. We welcome this agreement and urge all Member States to pay their assessed contributions in full, on time and without conditions.

In conclusion, I should like to thank the coordinator of the resolution, Mr. Nester Odaga-Jalomayo of Uganda, for his tireless efforts, and Mr. Warren Sach and the personnel of the Budget Division for their high level of professionalism and for the expert advice they provided to the Committee in the pursuit of its goals.

Mr. Belinga-Eboutou (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): Cameroon is speaking on behalf of the African Group at this meeting devoted to the budget. Since this is the last meeting of the fifty-fourth session to be held before the third millennium, I would like to convey the views of the African Group on the chairing of our work to date and on the budget.

First of all, Mr. President, regarding the way our work has been guided, the African Group is pleased to say that you have shouldered this task with great diplomacy and wisdom and, above all, with clear-sightedness. The African Group feels that during the first part of the session you have been a good President, a very good President — in fact, an excellent President. You have continued this tradition of excellence, which began with Alex Quaison-Sackey, Angie Brooks, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, Salim Ahmed Salim, Paul Lusaka, Joseph Garba and Amara Essy. The African Group is proud of you.

I should now like to turn to the resolution regarding the budget for the biennium 2000-2001.

The African Group joined the consensus and would like to congratulate those who helped achieve it: our experts in the Fifth Committee, naturally; the Bureau of the Fifth Committee; the Group of 77 and China; and our partners. They have made considerable efforts and spent sleepless nights to provide our Organization with its first budget for the twenty-first century. This resolution, however, does give rise to certain considerations on the part of the African Group.

First, we take note of the fact that the global level of resources is for the most part below that requested by the Secretary-General, who more than anyone is aware of the genuine needs of our Organization. Of course, we regret that. Significant reductions were made to attain this level of consensus. We hope that those reductions will not have an adverse impact on the implementation of the various programmes mandated here.

The African Group welcomes the importance accorded to certain projects to which it attaches particular significance, notably to the United Nations Centre in Nairobi. We are gratified to note that the required resources were allocated to provide this Centre, by 1 January 2001, with a permanent interpretation system. We would also like to mention the Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa, as well as the revitalization of Swahili and of the African Institute for the Prevention of Crime.

This list would have been even more striking if our partners had, despite budgetary constraints, given favourable consideration to the request for use of the positive balance relating to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. We hope that this has merely been postponed and can be done later.

The General Assembly in plenary has had the working hours of the Fifth Committee imposed on it, and, in view of the lateness of the hour, I shall conclude.

We are now only a few days from Christmas and the New Year. So to you, Mr. President, to all of our colleagues and to each Ambassador — that is to say, all those who work for peace — I wish to say, "Happy holidays and a happy New Year".

Mrs. Aragon (Philippines): First of all, my delegation would like to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Guyana speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. My delegation has noted that the level of resources for the biennium 2000-2001, which we have just approved, is lower than the amount proposed by the Secretary-General.

My delegation hopes that the level of resources which we have just approved will enable the Secretary-General to implement fully and effectively all mandated programmes and activities, in particular those activities with respect to the budget sections relating to international and regional cooperation for development.

Since we have just adopted this budget, we would like to join others in appealing to all Member States to pay their assessed contributions in full, on time and without conditions.

Regarding section 27C of the programme budget, my delegation wishes to place on the record its continuing reservations regarding section V, paragraph 22, of General Assembly resolution 53/221. We will pursue this question under the agenda item on human resources management at the first resumed session of the Fifth Committee.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to thank the coordination of agenda item 121, on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001, Mr. Nester Odaga-Jalomayo, representative of Uganda, for the manner in which he conducted informal consultations on this item.

My delegation would also like to thank all the Secretariat officials who provided us with their technical assistance during the informal consultations, as well as all delegations that participated in the informal consultations.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of position.

We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 121.

Agenda item 118

Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/54/511/Add.1)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the two draft decisions recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 7 of its report.

The Fifth Committee adopted draft decision I, entitled "Action taken on certain items", without a vote. May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to do the same?

Draft decision I was adopted.

The President: The Fifth Committee adopted draft decision II, entitled "Biennial programme of work of the Fifth Committee for 2000-2001", without a vote. May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to do likewise?

Draft decision II was adopted.

The President: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 118.

Agenda item 12 *(continued)*

Report of the Economic and Social Council (A/54/3 and Add.1)

The President: Members will recall that chapters I to VI, sections A to C of chapter VII, and chapters VIII and IX of the report of the Economic and Social Council were assigned for consideration directly in plenary meeting.

May I take it that the Assembly wishes to take note of those chapters and sections of the report?

It was so decided.

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of those chapters and sections of the report of the Economic and Social Council that were assigned for consideration in plenary meeting?

It was so decided.

The President: May I also take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 12?

It was so decided.

Programme of work

The President: With regard to the programme of work of the General Assembly — apart from organizational matters and items that may have to be considered by operation of the rules of procedure of the Assembly, and bearing in mind the action already taken by the Assembly thus far — I should like to propose that the following agenda items remain open for consideration during the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly: 10, 11, 15, 17, 20, 22, 27, 37, 38, 42 to 44, 46 to 50, 59 to 61, 63, 90, 97, 99, 101, 106, 110, 116, 117 to 151, 160, 163, 164, 166, 169, 170, 172 and 173.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly that those agenda items remain open for consideration during the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly?

It was so decided.

Statement by the President

The President: Before suspending this session of the General Assembly, I would like to offer some observations and assessments of what we have done so far. At the close of the general debate in October, I did the same by underlining certain issues and directions.

To begin with, during the first three months of its work, the General Assembly considered 148 items. All in all, we had a total of 174 agenda items. Despite the divergence of the views presented by various delegations and political differences on some of the issues, the atmosphere in the General Assembly's deliberations was businesslike and characterized by cooperation and mutual respect. The Assembly adopted some 250 resolutions, about 180 of them by consensus, and 77 decisions, on those issues that are of major concern to the Members and the Organization.

As regards the Security Council, many speakers addressed the following issues: humanitarian intervention; conflict situations in Africa; regional initiatives; sanctions; and reform of the Council itself, including its expansion, representativeness, transparency, openness

and working methods. Some delegations praised the improvement in its format — more open meetings — while others reiterated calls for a more analytical Council report on the ongoing activities and inclusion of more information on its informal consultations of the whole. A large number of delegations stated that humanitarian intervention without the Council's authorization is unacceptable, yet even they accepted that the subject must still be discussed in appropriate forums. Concerns were expressed by Member States over the Council's slow response to the conflicts in Africa, and they called for a more balanced approach to important events, especially in respect of United Nations peacekeeping and financing, where speed and even-handedness were called for.

During the debate on the enlargement of the membership of the Security Council, 85 speakers — a record number — took the floor in plenary meeting. The tone of the comprehensive exchange of views on this subject was more encouraging than in past years, although wide areas of differences persist concerning cluster 1 issues and the exercise of the veto. Most delegations continued to insist on a more representative Council to reflect changes in the world since the Second World War, and to enhance the Council's credibility, legitimacy and effectiveness. Clearly, this is one of the main challenges that the United Nations is going to be facing in 2000.

Although all members shared the same belief that there is an urgent need now for changes in the composition and methods of work of the Security Council to prevent an endemic gridlock, it became clear once again that no concrete conclusions could be drawn at this time.

The Assembly devoted three meetings to the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development. During the debate, the following major points emerged: globalization and the international financial crisis; the decline of official development assistance and debt-relief initiatives; good governance; people-centred development; poverty eradication; the creation of productive employment opportunities; basic social services; and the role of civil society in decision-making, resource allocation, development and human security.

It was stressed that while some countries enjoyed economic growth and the benefits of globalization, the vulnerable economies of the developing countries continued to be negatively affected by uncontrolled circumstances. In this light, the forthcoming special session, which will be held in Geneva in 2000, should serve as a crucial pillar in the deliberations on the redesign of the global financial architecture.

The consensus was that the commitments agreed upon at Copenhagen should be reaffirmed and transformed into concrete realities. The special session should identify progress made and obstacles encountered in implementing the Programme of Action, and agree on new initiatives. What is needed is a frank assessment of the factors hampering implementation and progress.

On the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, the Secretary-General stated that urgent priority should be given to Africa. This must be reflected in the budget and priorities set by the General Assembly. He also expressed the view that the Assembly should establish its own working group to take stock of the progress so far in implementing the proposals contained in his earlier report, which was extensively discussed by both the General Assembly and the Security Council, as well as other United Nations bodies.

The Secretary-General further proposed that the working group focus on new ways to mobilize assistance to post-conflict societies, including debt cancellation. He added that while almost every agency and operational arm of the United Nations had a special programme devoted to Africa, and even though the Organization had spent generous amounts of its resources on the continent, the United Nations still needed to be more involved in Africa and play a more effective role, as it does elsewhere, without undue preconditions. In this connection, I intend to announce soon the names of the two coordinators for the working group. To make the conflicts in Africa a fixation — even an obsession — would not do justice to the people who are trying so hard every day to carry out the necessary political, economic and legislative reforms and to devote their time and energies to ensure sustained peace, stability and development.

The eradication of poverty is an essential prerequisite for development. The more Africa has worked, however, the fewer benefits it has drawn from its efforts. There are severe problems, such as those relating to financing, a skilled labour force and the difficult struggle against widespread epidemics. For example, the fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic must be intensified because it is a threat to the very existence of many African countries. The United Nations must, more than ever, take the leadership to combat this

devastating menace and help save millions of lives. This year's collaboration between the United Nations and civil society on World AIDS Day was most laudable. It set a wonderful example worth pursuing further, on an ongoing basis.

Under the item on emergency assistance to individual countries, the Assembly adopted 19 resolutions, to provide emergency international assistance to regions and individual countries, including the Balkans, Central America, Venezuela — which is particularly affected at the present time — the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Afghanistan, East Timor, Tajikistan, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and others. In this context, Mr. Jørgen Bøjer, the Permanent Representative of Denmark, was industrious and imaginative in taking the time to coordinate the negotiations to reach consensus on the many draft resolutions that were eventually adopted by the Assembly. I wish, on behalf of the General Assembly, to thank him for his outstanding service.

Dialogue among civilizations has continued to draw the serious attention of Member States. The General Assembly adopted a resolution on this important subject and invited Governments and other interested parties to further intensify their actions to promote widely the concept of dialogue among civilizations. The Islamic Republic of Iran has provided committed leadership by spearheading an open-ended and robust dialogue on the subject at the United Nations and by inviting influential personalities from outside to share their thoughts with United Nations representatives. Let us keep this dialogue alive and lively.

The importance of the item on oceans and the law of the sea was underscored by several speakers, and the Assembly adopted three resolutions. The need for wider acceptance of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and its consistent application was stressed by many, as was the importance of the harmonization of national legislation with its provisions. Throughout the debate, the responsible use and sustainable development of ocean resources was highlighted. So, too, was the protection and preservation of the marine environment and the implementation of the Global Plan of Action for land-based sources of pollution and maritime safety.

Assistance in mine action was discussed at length and a resolution was adopted. The speakers repeated their outrage at the destructive effects of landmines, expressed their concern over the humanitarian suffering and socio-economic impact of landmines and noted the need for a continued commitment of the international community in the field of clearing anti-personnel landmines. Another major contribution to disarmament was the adoption by the Assembly of the resolution on a nuclear-weapon-free zone for Central Asia. The adoption of the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism is another key achievement. This timely action will fill a lacuna in the international law on terrorism and further strengthen efforts to combat this savage crime.

Other major issues of global concern that the Assembly or its Committees covered dealt with a number of fields: children trapped in and brutalized by armed conflicts; gender equality; the proliferation of small arms and their negative impact; assistance to small island developing States; the International Criminal Court and its role in inter-State relations; the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, to be convened in 2001; and the high-level international forum on financing for development, which is also envisaged for 2001.

The reviewing and streamlining of the new scale of assessments is a difficult question, bearing as it does on the United Nations budget itself and resources available to the Organization to carry out its work globally. The resolutions and decisions of the Fifth Committee that the Assembly adopted give an indication that we are nowhere near achieving the ideal end to this longest-running agenda item. But we must continue the search.

Since the founding of the United Nations in 1945, the General Assembly has reached this stage of its work many times in the past, but none has been as propitious and pregnant with expectations as its fifty-fourth session at the century's and the millennium's end. The past is the mother of the future, with the present acting as midwife, but it is the future that matters most for human survival and progress.

No human generation has ever had the opportunity, the resources, the knowledge or the power at its disposal that ours has to meet the pressing human needs to save our children, to wipe out the killer diseases, to protect the environment and to empower the people with the productive skills to create and distribute wealth justly in society.

That obligation should also impel us, representing as we do all nations, cultures and civilizations and belonging to one human family, to bring together Governments, big

business, workers, non-governmental organizations, academia and the media, on the one hand; to wage an all-out war against HIV/AIDS, poverty and abuse of children; and, on the other, to strengthen the United Nations to become a truly democratic, effective, transparent and people-driven Organization.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude and indebtedness to all representatives for the encouragement and assistance they extended. They did so here in the Assembly, in the General Committee and in other major Committees, as well as during all types of informal consultations and in group or bilateral meetings.

Our illustrious Secretary-General and his Deputy have been generous with their time and advice. I thank them warmly. The Vice-Presidents were always readily available to assist and provide insight in our deliberations, including Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of People's Democratic Republic of Algeria and the current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), and His Serene Highness, Prince Albert of Monaco.

I had excellent interactions with the dedicated Chairpersons of the Main Committees, who contributed so much to our common achievements. Many sincere thanks to all of them.

Mr. Jin Yongjian and his able senior assistants and secretaries are exemplary United Nations civil servants and a hard-working team of professionals. My own office staff and security officers carried the heaviest burden by being always there within my shooting range and bore it all with remarkable excellence and a sense of humour. I am immensely grateful to them all.

There are many contingents of wonderful friends and supporters of the United Nations and its activities out there. How fortunate the United Nations community is to have such trusted and loyal members of our common extended family who care.

Before I conclude, may I say, partly on a lighter note and partly with sincere appreciation, that this plenary session was originally supposed to have recessed on 14 December. That recess was moved to 17 December, then 22 December, and now finally to 23 December. Delegations and Secretariat members serving on and responsible for the Fifth Committee, respectively, worked hard and long to finalize their work and to produce the recommendations, draft resolutions and decisions that the Assembly has just acted upon.

I wish to commend the Chairperson of the Fifth Committee, Ambassador Wensley of Australia. I also want to commend the Coordinator of the Fifth Committee, the representative of Uganda, for his tireless efforts. Tough negotiations are the name of the game. Hopefully, whenever they are undertaken, it is in the spirit of fairness. As the saying goes, all is well that ends well.

In conclusion, I wish one and all a very happy holiday season and renewed vitality for the heavy schedule of activities that awaits us in 2000 and beyond. Tomorrow will be another day and when it comes, as it will, let it bring a new dawn and a triumphant take-off for the benefit of all the peoples of the world.

To those who must travel far, I wish them *bon voyage*. To those who must travel from this building to their homes, I wish them, too, *bon voyage*.

The meeting rose at 10.30 p.m.